

THE U.S.-MOROCCAN AGREEMENT  
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS  
FOR U.S. RAPID DEPLOYMENT FORCES

March 1983

The Congress of the United States  
Congressional Budget Office

<b>Report Documentation Page</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>		
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1. REPORT DATE <b>MAR 1983</b>	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-1983 to 00-00-1983</b>			
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>The U.S.-Moroccan Agreement and Its Implications for U.S. Rapid Deployment Forces</b>			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S)			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>Congressional Budget Office, Ford House Office Building 4th Floor, Second and D Streets, SW, Washington, DC, 20515-6925</b>			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>11</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

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## PREFACE

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Any dispatch of U.S. Rapid Deployment Forces (RDF) to Southwest Asia would require in-transit stops by substantial numbers of U.S. aircraft. <sup>1/</sup> Prepared at the request of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Africa, this paper examines the requirements of the RDF for such in-transit support and the availability of airfields to meet those requirements. The paper focuses on the role of airfields in Morocco made available through an agreement between that nation and the United States signed in 1982. The paper also investigates the costs associated with the 1982 agreement.

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Alice M. Rivlin  
Director

March 1983

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1. For a full discussion of the RDF, see Congressional Budget Office, Rapid Deployment Forces: Policy and Budgetary Implications (February 1983).

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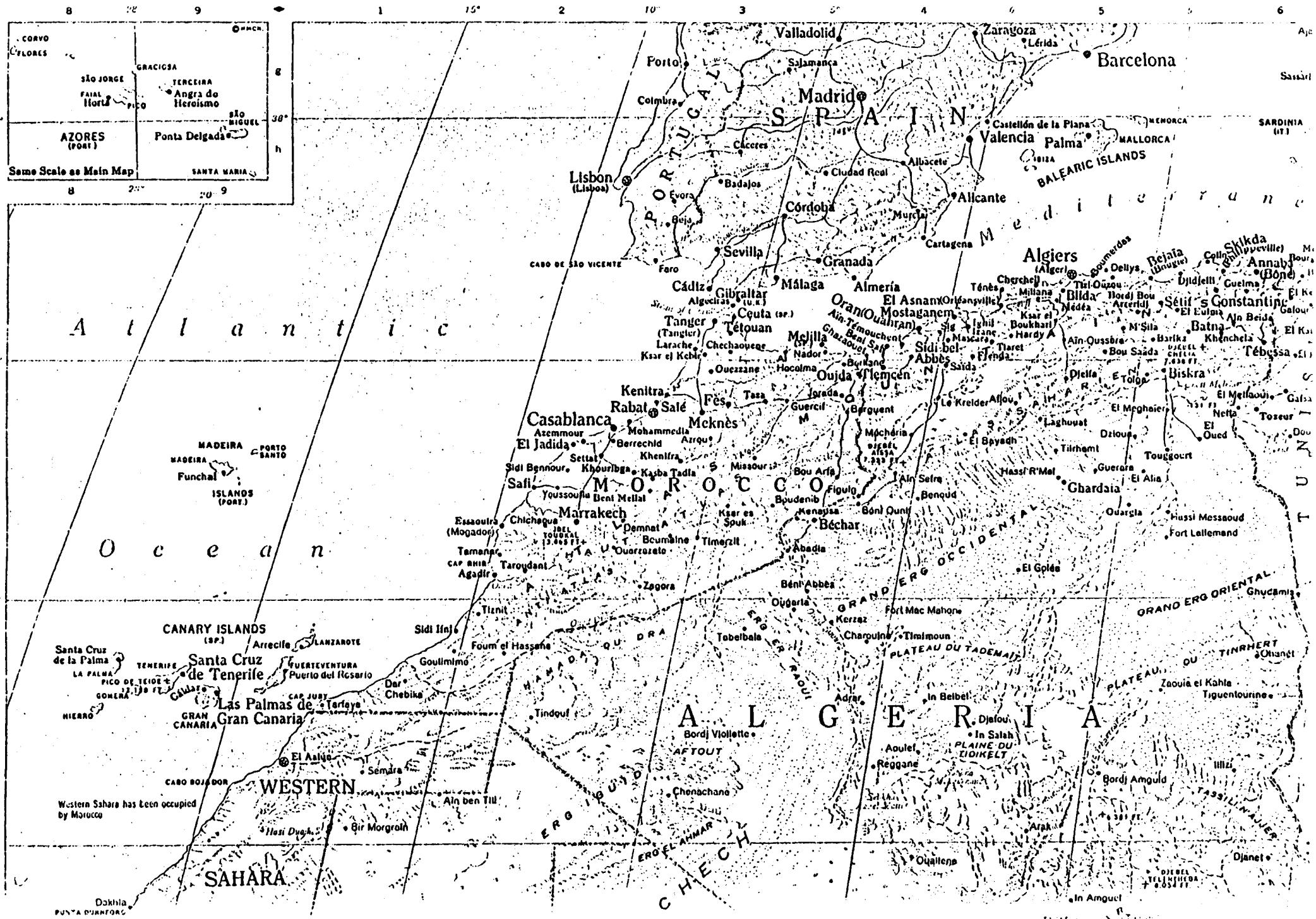
## SUMMARY

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The importance of access to air bases in Morocco to planning for use of U.S. Rapid Deployment Forces in Southwest Asia depends heavily on the availability of other en route bases and on the outcome of current negotiations with Portugal concerning the use of Lajes facilities in the Azores. Today, the Morocco air bases provide an important backup to facilities in Lajes and in Spain and might also be useful for aircraft returning from Southwest Asia. Thus, they give RDF planners increased flexibility and offer a degree of redundancy for force deployments; such redundancy can be a major asset in deployment planning.

The U.S.-Moroccan agreement reached in 1982 provides for no explicit payments to Morocco in exchange for use of their air bases. Improvements to the airfields would, however, be needed. In fiscal year 1984, the Administration has requested \$28 million for such improvements. The Administration has also requested \$60 million in Foreign Military Sales aid for Morocco for 1984 and \$92 million in other security and economic assistance, though none of these funds are tied directly to the agreement.

The usefulness of Moroccan air bases may have some limitations. Scenarios under which the United States would be denied use of Spanish or Portuguese bases—which also figure prominently in RDF planning—might also lead to denial of the Moroccan airfields. Moreover, if the Lajes agreement now under negotiation is favorably concluded, and if the program to improve Lajes facilities to achieve an aircraft sortie capability of 200 aircraft per day is funded, then the importance of the Moroccan air bases would be greatly diminished. Moroccan bases would still, however, provide a measure of flexibility and redundancy to deployment planning. Further, they could be a useful complement to other bases—notably, those of NATO allies in Europe—for RDF aircraft returning from a Southwest Asian engagement.



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**PART I. THE 1982 AGREEMENT BETWEEN MOROCCO AND THE UNITED STATES**

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Were U.S. Rapid Deployment Forces (RDF) to be sent from their regular stations in the continental United States to participate in an engagement in Southwest Asia, they would require access to air bases on the way for refueling. The airfields of Morocco, on the northwestern coast of the African continent (see map) are seen by the Department of Defense as being one such access area for the RDF.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ON U.S.-MOROCCO RELATIONS**

Use of Moroccan military facilities for naval and air operations dates back to World War II, when the United States signed a secret agreement with France (at the time, Morocco was a French protectorate) to use Moroccan airfields for B-47 bombers. When Morocco attained its full independence in 1956, Morocco's King Mohammed V viewed the use of Moroccan bases by U.S. forces as a matter of some concern, feeling that the U.S. presence impinged on his nation's sovereignty. Thus, in 1959, Morocco and U.S. officials in the Eisenhower Administration reached an accord whereby the United States agreed to close down its air base facilities by 1963. The United States has continued to regard Morocco as a friend strategically located on the Strait of Gibraltar, so maintaining an amicable relationship has been considered to be in the best interests of the United States.

When U.S. interest in Southwest Asia and the Persian Gulf intensified in 1979, friends in a position to provide some assistance to the United States (either within Southwest Asia or en route) took on even greater importance. The Carter Administration asked the Congress for increased military aid for Morocco to supply combat equipment for forces fighting Polisario guerrillas in the western Sahara. Although this step was not directly tied to U.S. planning for the RDF, support by Morocco and its allies in the Organization of African Unity would today be important, should the United States deploy forces to Southwest Asia.

The current Administration apparently also views a friendly and stable Moroccan government as an important part of U.S. foreign policy. In 1982, Morocco's possible role in deployments of the RDF was brought to the forefront. A Joint Military Commission between Morocco and the United

States was established in April and on May 27, following the visit of King Hassan to the United States, an agreement between the two countries was formalized. The accord provides U.S. access to Moroccan air base facilities in the event of U.S. deployments to Southwest Asia. The text of the agreement has not been made public, but much of its contents is known through press reports. 2/

### THE 1982 AGREEMENT

Initiated by then-Secretary of State Haig and Moroccan Foreign Minister Boucetta, the agreement is a basic access and transit agreement whereby the United States will be allowed access to Moroccan airfields when necessary to support force deployments during unspecified contingencies. It does not provide blanket access for the United States, however. Morocco retains the right to deny the United States access to airfields, should it be in Morocco's best interests to do so. Although no specifics in this regard are available, scenarios in which denial of access might occur could certainly develop.

No requirements for financial or other support have been agreed to by the United States in the terms of the agreement. No specific level of improvements to airfields is detailed, nor are there any provisions for establishing permanent U.S. facilities or developing a U.S. staging base for future contingency operations.

The agreement is to extend for six years and requires that either party must give advance warning of at least two years should either party wish to cancel the agreement.

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2. See for example, "Morocco Grants U.S. Access to Airbases," The New York Times, May 28, 1982, p. A3; and "U.S., Morocco Sign Airfield Agreement," Aerospace Daily, June 4, 1982, p. 190.

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**PART II. THE EFFECTS OF MOROCCAN AGREEMENT  
ON U.S. DEPLOYMENT CAPABILITIES**

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Current planning for Rapid Deployment Forces relies heavily for refueling on the availability of Lajes Field in the Azores, a cluster of mid-Atlantic islands lying some 800 miles to the west of Morocco and belonging to Portugal. The United States has a long-standing agreement with the government of Portugal concerning U.S. use of the Lajes Field facility. Negotiations on a new agreement have been slowly progressing for the past couple of years. Though the current operating agreement expired in February 1983, the United States continues to enjoy access to Lajes by extention of that agreement. The Portuguese have agreed to allow U.S. construction of facilities that are NATO-related, but negotiations over the construction of facilities specifically for Southwest Asia contingencies continue.

The United States might also rely on bases in Spain. Until recently, there was some concern about the availability of Spanish airfields to support deployments of U.S. forces to Southwest Asia. Though the United States and Spain signed an agreement on 2 July 1982 giving the United States use of three air bases in Spain, the future status of the treaty was of some concern. The assumption of power by the a new government in October 1982 raised some uncertainty about Spain's integration into NATO. A recent protocol, negotiated between the United States and Spain, will allow U.S. use of the bases regardless of Spain's position in the NATO alliance.

Morocco would allow U.S. use of two major airfields: Mohammed V, the international civilian airport outside of Casablanca, and Sidi Sliman, a military base about 60 miles northeast of the capital of Rabat. (The latter was a U.S. strategic bomber base prior to 1963.) Some improvements to these bases would have to be made to support large force deployments.

**AIRFIELD CAPABILITIES AND REQUIREMENTS**

The airlift enhancement program proposed by the Administration will add more than 100 new aircraft to the U.S. airlift fleet. 3/ By 1988, when

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3. Further details on U.S. air mobility expansions are given in Congressional Budget Office, Rapid Deployment Forces, Chapter IV.

these aircraft enter the fleet and are used in conjunction with current military and civilian cargo aircraft, the United States will be able to generate a maximum daily capability of approximately 161 cargo airlift sorties bound for Southwest Asia; today, approximately 123 daily sorties are possible (see Table 1). By 1988, en route transit facilities for approximately 161 sorties per day will be required to sustain U.S. cargo aircraft.

TABLE 1. U.S. CARGO AIRCRAFT AVAILABLE  
AND DAILY SORTIES GENERATED in 1983 AND 1988

	1983	1988
Military Aircraft <u>a/</u>	304	404 <u>b/</u>
Civilian Aircraft <u>c/</u>	127	127
<hr/>		
Sorties Generated	123	161

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office.

- a. Primary aircraft available.
- b. Assumes the availability of 50 new C-5 and 56 new KC-10 aircraft in the Department of Defense Airlift Program.
- c. Assumes no net increase in the Civilian Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) program. The numbers reflect the number of 747 and 707 cargo aircraft provided by the Department of Defense in the Persian Gulf Scenario of the Congressionally Mandated Mobility Study.

At present, Lajes can sustain somewhat in excess of 75 aircraft sorties per day or 47 percent of what the Congressional Budget Office estimates will be required. Though exact figures concerning the Spanish air bases are not publicly available, it is assumed in this paper that--with the availability

of three air bases--their total combined capacity would be roughly equivalent to the current Lajes field capacity. Under this assumption, therefore, the Lajes facility and the Spanish facilities can sustain 100 percent of the current cargo airlift requirement and 94 percent of the 1988 airlift requirement.

In this context, Moroccan air bases would provide increased flexibility to deployment plans and "redundancy" (backup) for the deployment plans. If for any reason the Lajes facility or the Spanish air bases should not be available for Southwest Asia deployments of U.S. forces, the Moroccan air bases would become critical.

The 161 cargo aircraft sorties that could be generated by 1988 reflect only a one-way transit sortie. But planes that deploy to Southwest Asia must also return; therefore, transit bases for returning aircraft are also necessary. Moroccan bases might therefore be useful for return transits. If Lajes and Spanish bases were fully loaded with aircraft deploying to Southwest Asia, Morocco could provide access for returning aircraft. Of course, many aircraft returning from Southwest Asia might have access to other NATO airfields--for example, in Italy and Germany--in which case the Moroccan bases would merely offer increased flexibility and redundancy.

#### Improvements for Lajes Airfield

The importance of Moroccan air bases could decrease considerably if negotiations are successful in reaching agreement on the use of Lajes facilities for Southwest Asian contingencies. Recently signed agreements with Spain and Morocco might be instrumental in allowing the United States to reach a favorable arrangement regarding the Lajes facilities. When the agreement is successfully concluded, the United States intends to spend more than \$131 million to upgrade existing facilities and to fund new logistical support projects. The Lajes facility, when completed, will have a capacity to sustain 200 aircraft sorties a day--more than enough to support any anticipated Southwest Asia contingency. Spanish and Moroccan air bases would serve primarily as a backup for contingency planning, or they could be used as transit bases for aircraft returning from Southwest Asia.

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### **PART III. COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE U.S.-MOROCCO AGREEMENT**

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The agreement signed in May between the United States and Morocco provides for no explicit payments to Morocco in exchange for use of their air bases.<sup>4/</sup> However, some improvements to the facilities would be necessary to support a large U.S. deployment, and the funds associated with the military construction program would benefit the Moroccan economy.

The fiscal year 1984 Air Force Military Construction budget request contains \$28 million for improvements to air base facilities in Morocco. These would upgrade existing fuel facilities, pave runways, boost electrical power, and upgrade the water system. More funds might be required in the future to provide additional improvements. (There are no funds to provide for permanent U.S. staging-base or prepositioning facilities.)

It can also be assumed that Morocco would expect continued U.S. military and economic aid. In fiscal year 1983, the Administration requested \$100 million in Foreign Military Sales (FMS) funds for Morocco, more than triple the sum authorized in 1982. The Congress, however, limited FMS funds for Morocco to \$50 million, an increase of just two-thirds over the 1982 level. The Administration has requested \$60 million in FMS funds for Morocco for 1984. Additional funds under the Military Assistance Program (MAP), the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET), and the Economic Support Fund program are also being requested for Morocco. Funds for these programs exceed \$92 million.

Again, none of these costs are tied explicitly to the access and transit agreement. The military construction costs, however, are a direct result of the agreement, while a portion of FMS funds may be loosely associated with the agreement. The total funds requested for Morocco for 1984, including all security assistance funds and military construction funds, are \$180.6 million.

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4. Information provided to the Congressional Budget Office by the U.S. Department of State.